CUBA'S LABOR FAMINE (MORE HANDS NEEDED FOR SUGAR AND TOBACCO PLANTATIONS)

Congress and Its Immigration Schemes—Farm Labor and Prices—Tenants Who Work on the Shares—Big Pay of Cigarmakers—Cuba's Timber Industry—Wages in the Building Trades—Cuban Masons vs. American—Among the Ironworkers and Railway Employes—Something About Negro and Chinese Labor.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

HIGH PRICED WOMEN LABOR. GIRL TOBACCO STRIPPERS GET TWO DOLLARS PER DAY.

RAILWAY CONDUCTOR, STATION AGENT AND RURAL POLICEMAN. THERE ARE 5,000 RAILWAY MEN IN CUBA.

CUBA WANTS FARM HANDS. MEN LIKE THESE NOW DO THE WORK.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Havana, Sept. 20.—Cuba is suffering from a labor famine. Wages were never higher in the tobacco districts, and some of the sugar crop of the past season was not harvested for lack of hands.

Thousands of Americans who have purchased lands here are doing more or less to develop their holdings, and the good times have created an increased demand for workmen in every part of the island.

There have been a number of projects before Congress to encourage immigration, and some of these will probably be adopted.

The immigrants most wanted are those from the Canary Islands and Northern Spain, and they already constitute a large part of the white labor.

They are thrifty, industrious and easily controlled. They are in many respects better than the native Cubans, and are considered the best unskilled laborers of Europe.

Attempts are also being made to bring in Italians. The climate here is about the same as that of Italy, and the Italians have proved a success in Argentina, Brazil and other South American countries.

At present there is a flowing immigration to Cuba from Spain which comes and goes every year.

The men are brought in for the harvest season, working chiefly in the tobacco districts. It costs them about $40 each for their round trip, and the wages are such that each can save $40 in a single harvest.

A similar immigration is carried on between the coffee plantations of Brazil and the wheat fields of Argentina, the men going regularly back and forth.

FARM HANDS IN CUBA.

The greatest demand for labor is on the farms and plantations. Cuba is an agricultural country, and one-fifth of the whole population works on farms.

The island has about 1,500,000 inhabitants, and of these 600,000 are workers of one kind or another. Three hundred thousand do farming, and only a little over 30,000 are engaged in manufacturing.

There are less than 10,000 at work in the mines and four or five thousand employed on the railroads.

I have these figures from our Department of Labor, which is my authority for other statements made further on in this article.

Farm hands get all the way from $10 to $20 a month and found. In some places they are paid a dollar a day and at harvest time the wages rise to those of the United States.

A great deal of work is done by contract. A man will take care of a certain piece of land on the shares, or keep it clean at so much per acre per month.

I know of men who make $70 and $80 a month in this way. They have their children help them in the fields and do the work by the piece or by the day in addition to their contract.

WORK ON THE SHARES.

Many of the farms are rented out. Near Havana a tenant gets the use of five acres and a yoke of oxen for half the crop. Two-thirds of the tobacco of Vinar del Rio is raised by tenants, and a great deal of vegetable gardening is carried on on the shares. The land is so fertile that a small tract will produce three or four crops a year.

There are tenants raising corn near Havana who cut five crops of fodder a year. They can raise about ten tons to the acre, and a man can, I am told, realize $300 a year from a five-acre crop.

Much of the sugar raising is done on the shares, a tenant taking care of so much cane for a part of the crop, which is disposed of at a sugar mill near by. Such farming, however, is more profitable in the tobacco regions.

The labor is lighter there, and it is such that almost all the members of the families can work in the field.

There is quite a movement now in coffee planting. There is a high tariff on home-grown coffee and this will probably be continued for many years to come.

It takes three years to raise the first crop, and during this time the tenants are paid about $60 per annum for attending to a tract of thirty-three acres, with the understanding that after that time the owner of the land and the tenant shall divide the crop equally. The tenant take care of the plants, he picks the coffee and delivers it at the drying place.

It is surprising, by-the-way, considering that Cuba is a part of the West Indies, where the common laborer often gets but 25 cents a day.

In Havana such workmen get from $1 a day upward. Outside they receive $1 silver, and at flush times $1 in gold and more. Board is often included in such contracts, but the board consists of rice, jerked beef, beans and little else. The wages are highest in the tobacco regions. There men are paid from $1 to $2 a day, and sometimes even $4 a day. There is a great deal of work in raising tobacco and it requires skilled labor to a large extent.

The seeds have to be sowed in beds and the plants transplanted. The plants have to be watered, trimmed and budded, and when the leaves are gathered they must be cured, bundled and baled. Much of this is done by the piece. Five dollars is paid for setting out a thousand plants, and the packers get from $6 to $9 a bale.

It is estimated that one can raise and tend about 10,000 seed plants. It requires that many to set out an acre and to tend five such acres it will keep one family busy. Much of the best tobacco is now raised under shade at a cost of several hundred dollars per acre.

BIG PAY OF CIGARMAKERS.

The workers in the cigar factories get big pay. There are thousands of such men in Havana who receive from $2 to $5 a day.

They have men to read the newspapers to them while they work, whose wages are $30 a day. Indeed, the cigarmakers might be called the aristocrats of manufacturing Cuba.

Some of these men work by the piece and some by the day. The wages vary according to the work, and also according to the locality.

They are higher in Havana than in the suburbs and other cities scattered over the island.

In these factories the men make considerably more than the women. I visited one in Havana where 600 girls were employed in stripping the leaves from the stems and spreading them out for the cigar-rollers. These girls make on the average $1 a day, the pay roll for female labor in that factory alone being about $600 per day.

The most of these girls are young. Fully 300 of them were under 15, a few were middle-aged and one or two were gray-haired.

There are about 1,000 women employed in the tobacco trade in this island. Some of them work by the piece and some by the day. The cigars are packed by women and the same is true of cigarettes.

In some factories the women earn $12 a week while in others they make something like $20 a month. In most factories the women and men have separate rooms, and in some no women are employed.

CUBA'S NEW SAWMILLS.

New sawmills are being started throughout Eastern Cuba. The country is just opening up, and a large number of men are employed in getting out timber. There are hundreds hewing mahogany logs, which are carried to the ports on the railroads or down the rivers at the times of the floods. Others are making railroad ties, and others sawing timber and preparing it for shipment.

At such work unskilled men are getting $1 a day. The price for cutting down and hewing a tree which will make a log thirty feet long and four feet in diameter is 50 cents, and 50 cents is paid for trees above that size.

The sawyers in the Havana lumber mills receive from $30 to $60 a month, and the mahogany hewers are paid from $5 to $7 per 1,000 feet. Engineers are paid $60 a month, while head sawyers get $3 or $4 a day. Wood choppers receive $12 a month and board, and charcoal burners about the same.

There is an enormous business in charcoal here. This furnishes the fuel for domestic uses.

All cooking is done over braziers or in little holes in ledges built up against the wall of the kitchen, making a sort of brick stove as it were.

The houses seldom have chimneys and only the fewest have cook stoves of the American or European pattern.

The charcoal peddler is to be seen everywhere. He carries his fuel in a cart drawn by a mule or horse and goes from door to door like a huckster.

THE BUILDING TRADES.

Mechanics of all kinds are paid less here than in the United States. The native Cubans are naturally skillful. Many of the workmen are jacks of all trades, and our mechanics would probably say masters of none. Still they do excellent work and some of the buildings made by them are magnificent.

There are about 14,000 carpenters in Cuba. They work almost altogether by the rule of thumb. In building they cut the pieces too large and then saw or shave them down to fit. When they make a roof they will construct the framework on the ground until they get it of the right dimensions and shape. They will then take it to pieces and re-erect it in its proper position.

Such methods are time consumers, and the Cuban carpenter at half price is dear in comparison to ours. Good carpenters are paid from $1.50 to $2 a day in the cities; in the smaller places they work for much less.

The wages of masons are equally low, but still their work is quite as costly as ours. The ordinary native bricklayer does well if he can put up 500 bricks per day.

The American on rough work can lay 1,500. The superiority of our masons was shown in the building of a brewery which was erected in Havana not long ago. A gang of bricklayers was imported from the United States, and was worked side by side with the Cuban bricklayers. The Americans laid three times as many bricks per day as the Cubans. It was a repetition of the experiment made on the Westinghouse building at Manchester, England. The contractor there was an American. He became disgusted with the slow work of the English bricklayers and imported a large number of American masons to work side by side with them.

Before the Americans came the English bricklayers laid 400 bricks per day. They opened their eyes when the Americans laid from 1,000 to 2,000, and they gradually put on a spurt, which brought them up close to the Americans.

Skilled bricklayers in Cuba get $1.50 to $2 a day, hodcarriers $1 and whitewashers and brushmen $1 and upward. All buildings here have thick walls. The brick is laid up in the rough and the wall covered with plaster or stucco where it faces the street. It is then painted in bright colors.

Most of the public buildings have a great deal of iron about them.

Their windows are covered with a lace-work of iron and iron balconies extend out from the second stories. The material used is wrought iron, and its making requires considerable skill. The men employed upon it get daily wages of $2.50 in gold, while their helpers and apprentices receive $1 and upward.

There are several machine shops in Cuba. One here in Havana works about 200 men. It pays its best mechanics $1 a day, and this wage is received by pattern-makers, molders, foundry men and others. Such men are scarce here. Helpers get $1.50 a day and apprentices about the same. Firemen are paid from $1 to $2 and outside laborers from $1 to $1.50.

ENGINEERS AND RAILWAY MEN.

There are many engineers employed on the plantations. Every big sugar mill has to have one or more, and there must be at the same time mechanics to keep the machinery in order.

Many such mills cost several hundred thousand dollars for their machinery alone and they require skilled men. Blacksmiths are employed on every plantation. They get $30 and upward a month.

There are about 5,000 men at work on the railroads, and among them a large number of engineers and firemen. The wages are different on different roads, but everywhere they are less than in the United States.

Few of the plantations pay more than $100 a month for their best engineers, and on the roads the locomotive engineers get from $60 to $150, and firemen from $35 to $50. On the Cuba road a large number of Americans are employed. They are, I suppose, paid better wages.

The most of the railroad conductors are natives.

They are polite and efficient. They receive less than the engineers. Brakemen get about $30 a month and station agents from $40 to $60 a month and quarters. The average men employed in the traffic service of Cuba do not earn more than $600 a year, and many of them much less.

In railroad building the natives work under foreign civil engineers. This was the way the Cuba road was constructed. It had at times 13,000 men, and it pushed them as they never had been pushed before.

The officials once attempted to change the hours of work. It is customary here to start the day at 6 and work until 11, then lay off until 2, when the work goes on until 6 in the evening. I understand that the Cuba Road Company tried to extend the morning until noon and stop off an hour earlier in the evening. This did not satisfy the natives and it had to be abandoned.

One reason was that the men start the day on a light meal, and they become played out if they work after 11 o'clock without further food. They like the noon hours for rest; and after their 11 o'clock breakfast of rice, jerked beef and plantains with coffee take a nap, lying flat on their backs.

In the evening they have a good dinner, and after it coffee and a smoke. The first breakfast, usually taken before going to work, consists of little more than a cup of black coffee and some bread. It is indeed a short ration for four or five hours of hard work.

NEGROES AND CHINESE.

A large part of the labor here is done by negroes, mulattoes and Chinese.

The Chinese were imported years ago under contracts to work for eight years at from 20 to 30 cents a day, and the negroes originally came in as slaves. Cuba had slaves as late as 1880, and it is estimated that it has imported more than 1,000,000 negroes during its slave history. At present about one-third of the population is black, and there are many mulattoes. Race antipathy is not so strong as in the United States, the lower classes of Spaniards and negroes having mixed.

Indeed, the negro has a higher standing here than in the United States, and, for this reason, it is said that the Cuban negroes do not welcome Americans, fearing they will not be so well treated by them as by the native whites.

A large part of the negro labor is lazy and unreliable. The men are not equal to our negroes.

This was found in the work upon the street railroads of Havana, which belong largely to Americans. In relaying the tracks not long ago a gang of Cuban negroes was employed, but the work went so slowly that American negroes were brought over and put on the work at about twice the wages received by the Cubans.

Both sets of hands were boarded, but the Americans did twice as much work as the Cubans, and they would have been cheap at double the money. This increase of pay, however, caused a strike on the part of the native negroes, and the result was that they got a raise of wages, although the Americans still did the most work.

In closing, I would say that I doubt whether Cuba is a good place just now for the American mechanic or common laborer without money. While the wages are high for Cuba, they are comparatively low as regards the United States. Our workmen cannot live on the ordinary Cuban fare, still.

They will find the hours of work different, and it will take them a long time to become accustomed to Cuban social life. If they have places beforehand, or can come here assured of work in some of the American colonies, they may do well; but otherwise the venture is, to say the least, doubtful. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

ZOO CROWD SEES TWO MEN FIGHT A PYTHON.

Twenty-Foot Reptile Could Not Shed His Skin and Keepers Had to Help.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

New York, Oct. 7.—Battling with a 20-foot python, two men were watched by a breathless crowd at New York Zoological Park, in Bronx Park. The spectators were astonished by the fearlessness of the men as they worked inside the cage of the most dangerous reptile in the park collection.

The keepers' perilous task was made necessary by the condition of the python, one of the largest in captivity and the especial pride of Curator Ditmars. About this time of the year these reptiles shed their skin. This they accomplish easily when not in captivity. When caged, however, assistance becomes necessary, and the keepers face grave peril, for if the python should swing its huge coils around one of the men no human arms could break the grip.

Several days ago the big python began to shed his skin. He became restless, suffered intensely and was inclined to resent intrusion. It was decided that Keepers Snyder and Fowler must help him.

While one covered the head of the reptile with a blanket and sat upon it, the other proceeded to remove the dead skin. Time after time the powerful body swung around and the keepers, while maintaining a firm grip, would have to dodge the huge coils. The work was continued all day Saturday and was completed yesterday.

When the old skin was finally removed the keepers made flying leaps from the cage, banged the doors and gave a sigh of relief.

There were other interesting things for the thousands at Zoological Park, not the least of which was the South African ostrich on which Doctor Blair recently performed an operation.

SOLDIER IN RAGE KILLS COMRADE

Bitter Quarrel Between Privates Results in Fatality—Bayonet Hurled at Fleeing Man Penetrates His Lungs.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

New York, Oct. 4.—Peter S. McIntyre, a private in Company One Hundred and One, Coast Artillery at Fort Totten, was killed in front of his quarters by a bayonet hurled at him by William S. Snyder of the same company. The blow was struck in the presence of the other members of the company. The victim died half an hour later in the post hospital, where he was attended by Doctor Major Charles Wilcox.

Drink and a quarrel over some trivial matter led to the murder. Both McIntyre and Snyder had been off duty. They were seen drinking with a third soldier at Whitestone earlier in the day. There was a quarrel on the way back to the post. The police who interviewed Major Frank R. Harlow at the fort say that McIntyre struck Snyder before the men reached the reservation.

Both men reached their quarters about 9 o'clock. Their comrades all say neither man was intoxicated. The quarrel, however, was immediately renewed. Snyder had taken his bayonet from the gun rack and placed it on his pillow.

Suddenly he seized it and made a dash for his opponent. McIntyre ran for the door. The others thought Snyder was fooling and let him pass. McIntyre ran out on the porch and down the steps. As Snyder reached the top of the steps he hurled the bayonet at the fleeing man with all the force of a man crazed by passion. The weapon struck McIntyre under the left shoulder blade and penetrated his lung. He sank to the ground. His companions seized Snyder.

Doctor Wilcox was at the dying man's side in a few minutes, and he was removed immediately to the hospital, where he died.

Lieutenant Faker put Snyder under arrest in double irons in the guardhouse. He has not yet been informed that his victim is dead. After the deed he said he hoped McIntyre would die. None of the soldiers professes to know the cause of Snyder's anger.

Acting Captain Murray of the Seventy-sixth Precinct and Detective Bolton went to Fort Totten yesterday afternoon to demand the surrender of the prisoner to the civil authorities. This was refused by Major Frank B. Harlow. The murder occurred on a United States reservation, where the police authorities have no jurisdiction. Snyder will be tried either by court-martial or by the United States courts.

Residents of Flushing and Whitestone say his crime at the door of the anti-saloon law. They say there has been a vast change for the worse in the behavior of the soldiers at the fort since the canteen was abolished and the men took to the saloons of the neighboring towns.

The murdered man enlisted sixteen months ago from Newburg. He was 21 years old and bore the reputation of being a quiet, well-behaved soldier. Snyder, on the other hand, was known as hot-tempered and quarrelsome, and has often been sent to the guardhouse. He enlisted from Brooklyn.

McIntyre's parents at Newburg have been notified of the death of their son.

IGORROTES EAT BATH SOAP.

Natives Are Attracted by Sweet Smell of the Cakes.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Portland, Ore., Oct. 7.—The Igorrotes at the Lewis and Clark Exposition, with the exception of the three who were at St. Louis last year, were treated to a new experience, when they were asked to take a bath with soap and water. The little men are fond of water, and have been accustomed to taking shower baths two or three times a day, but yesterday they were asked to use soap as well.

After the use of the soap had been explained to them, they were left to themselves for a moment, with the result that, attracted by the sweet smell of the cakes in their hands, they took to eating them.

Then the attendants got busy with a cleaning mixture, guaranteed to remove everything but the complexion. With a paint brush this was laid on the lithe bodies liberally, and, of course, the Igorrotes were compelled to resort to much scrubbing and rubbing to remove the mixture.

Robbed of Wedding Gifts.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

New York, Oct. 7.—The twenty-fifth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. A. Donath of No. 684 East One Hundred and Fifty-seventh street was duly celebrated and while Mrs. Donath went out to see guests off, burglars carried away $500 worth of silverware, the greater portion of it received during the day as wedding anniversary gifts from friends.